

## **Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes**

**January 9th, 2023**

**Present:** Brenda Lake, Pam Osborn, Marianne Perry, Warren Norris, Tom Molokie, Karen Peterson, Grace Keene, Lee Livingston, Andy Tolman (Chair)

**Meeting Minutes for Prior Meeting:** Prior meeting minutes were reviewed and unanimously accepted with minor changes.

**This is a special one subject meeting and Ben's Sexton report was not given. Ben was excused from the meeting.**

**Subject for discussion:** The committee is reviewing the proposal presented by Ben and others for installing wreaths at Veterans' gravesides, vis a vis, the Wreaths Across America program. The discussion was not to determine the worthiness or messaging of the program, but the extent of the Committee's, the Town's or the Town's personnel's involvement in support of the program. Support would mean managerial, labor, financial, or public support, such as advertising or fundraising.

Tom Molokie kicked off the discussion with an abstention stating that while he likes the idea and he likes Ben, he personally did not want to do any door knocking. He especially wanted to applaud Ben's efforts.

Marianne has a list of concerns including supporting veterans at the expense of other worthy groups who were pacifist or anti-war. She also felt more effort should be made at furthering environmental strengths in the form of plantings and not something transitory like 300 wreaths for veterans. She also expressed concerns about politically motivated groups that viewed wreaths as religious tokens. She also questioned whether we should be inviting groups that might be exploitive for financial gain.

Warren addressed each concern in turn, stating our charter is the support of the veterans and not other political or other potentially worthy groups. The plantings are definitely of issue and are discussed in our monthly meetings; however, this meeting is with regard to WAA and veterans. The politically motivated groups are spoilers who have loud but minority voices as all such groups do. Our role with the WAA hasn't been decided, but WAA is a non-profit.

Karen voiced concern that the WAA was used a platform for a particular viewpoint with which she did not agree.

Brenda expressed the view that we are forgetting we are advisory only. Pam agreed and added that while we are advisory we have to do so by providing information.

Lee explained his view that we as a committee do more than other concerns where he was involved, but expected that there should be no committee or board involvement in fund raising. Expounding on this he appreciated the idea solely as a veteran, but other programs in his experience seem to take on a characteristic of an entitlement, hard to discontinue in the future.

Pamela felt the event date of December 17th was limiting due to the weather and before Christmas holidays. This date is immutable and is the national date for the event. She did mention that if there was an organization that took up the banner this would be okay.

Brenda agreed and said it would have to be someone willing to fund it, give community notice, provide the placement and removal of the wreaths.

Grace questioned the date as well and didn't see who would arrange for the volunteering.

Pamela felt that if we did it for the veterans then how could we say no to another group wanting to decorate the gravesites for their concern.

Tom stated that we shouldn't prevent some other group from celebrating the veterans.

Andy agreed and stated he felt our role is to guide those who do, much like our current role. He liked the idea, but that the town should not take a role.

Grace stated that this means any role. Even if we suggest Ben take a leadership role that would involve his time which is time taken from the functions for which that we need him so badly, ie., day to day management of cemetery maintenance.

Brenda recommended we provide a yea or nay.

Andy suggested that we frame a statement remembering that the cemeteries are closed in December and the families with the greatest interest already decorate the stones in their own way.

Karen made a motion not to support the WAA in Readfield. Pamela wanted it amended with at this time.

Motion on the table: We don't support Wreaths Across America as this time. Motion failed due to no second. Discussion continued.

Discussion was lively and included statements about providing the board with a declaratory statement which would show how we like supporting the veterans, but that the role of the committee and the Select Board should not involve funding, the function of raising funds, managing, or devoting unnecessary resources.

After the discussion Tom moved that we end discussion and table the motion until next meeting. Andy to provide a statement and motion to review and vote on for the next meeting.

Andy polled for additional immediate business in need of discussion. There being none chaired the meeting concluded at 11:30 AM.

Next committee meeting will be the week after the Presidents' Day holiday on February 27th at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Warren Norris, Secretary